

The amendment of my friend from Florida to maintain development aid to Africa at current modest levels will be an important impetus to further economic and political development in South Africa. All of us in this Congress were cheered a year ago to see the first free, universal and multi-racial elections take place in South Africa. For years Americans have followed closely and sought to encourage developments in South Africa to bring about an end to apartheid and to encourage democratic development. While all of us have been delighted with the progress that has taken place thus far, the democratic evolution of South Africa depends on economic progress in South Africa. Furthermore, the progress in South Africa could be undermined if development lags and instability increases in the rest of Africa.

Furthermore, our assistance is not simply altruistic. Africa is a continent of rapidly growing countries, countries which are potential markets for United States products which our workers and our factories produce. These countries are sources of important goods and products that the American people and the American economy require. It is in our own national interest to foster economic development and progress for the peoples of Africa.

Mr. Chairman, I strongly support the amendment of Mr. Hastings.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 1996

SPEECH OF

HON. JAY KIM

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 13, 1995

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 1530) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 1996 for military activities of the Department of Defense, to prescribe military personnel strengths for fiscal year 1996, and for other purposes:

Mr. KIM. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of the Gilman amendment which modifies section 563 of the pending bill regarding the determination of whereabouts and status of missing persons.

First, though, I want to take a moment to recognize the unselfish support and dedication our colleague BEN GILMAN, the chairman of the International Relations Committee, has given to trying to help realize the fullest possible accounting of American POW/MIA's. Since coming to Congress in 1973, BEN GILMAN has been a responsible voice in protecting the rights of the families and trying to find answers to the questions about the fates of their missing loved ones. I think we all owe a debt of gratitude to Chairman GILMAN for his never-ending service and commitment to this most complex and frustrating of issues.

Section 563 of the National Defense Authorization Act would require the Secretary of Defense to centralize the oversight and policy responsibility for accounting for missing personnel. It also codifies and standardizes the procedures for accounting for members of the Armed Forces or civilian employees of the Defense Department who become missing as a result of military operations.

The Gilman amendment further refines and improves these new procedures:

First, it requires that the State Department, the Transportation Department, and the Central Intelligence Agency and other relevant agencies appoint an officer responsible for handling missing person issues. Among the 2,204 Americans still missing and unaccounted for from the Vietnam war are civilians associated with the State Department and Coast Guard personnel.

Second, it directs the Defense Department office to coordinate with these other agencies thereby ensuring a common, focused approach to achieving the fullest possible accounting of missing Americans.

Third, it changes from 24 hours to 30 days the time allotted to a family member in responding to the Defense Department board of inquiry.

Fourth, it extends the time after which the Defense Department can terminate the board after first notice of a disappearance from 20 to 30 years. Many of the still unresolved POW/MIA cases from the Vietnam war date back to a loss over 20 years ago.

Fifth, it provides the family of the missing American the right of judicial review for any finding of death made by the board.

I support this effort to improve the system of determining the status of missing Americans. While some may claim the system does not need fixing, the last 22 years of very frustrating experiences by the families of missing Americans underscores to me the need for statutory reforms. I think this measure goes a long way in implementing the kinds of changes these trying experiences have identified.

However, that is not to say that section 536, even with the improvements offered by the Gilman amendment, is perfect. I have reviewed the concerns raised by the Defense Department about these proposed changes and I believe further refinements are in order to address some of these issues.

Furthermore, I am concerned about the lack of definitive language regarding the rights of the primary next of kin, especially with regard to other family members. While I understand the interest in expanding the decision-making process to include other family members, I am aware of the complications this can present to both the Government and the families themselves. The present set of rights and responsibilities accorded to the primary next of kin should be maintained. This relationship in its current form appears to have worked well. In fact, I believe that some of the overall concerns raised by the Defense Department could be mitigated by clearing defining the principal role of the primary next of kin.

I am sure that these further improvements can be made during consideration of this issue by the other body or during the House-Senate conference on the fiscal year 1996 National Defense Authorization Act.

Hopefully, with more comprehensive accounting from Vietnam and these new procedures for determining the whereabouts and status of missing personnel, we will be able to bring a close to this final chapter of the Vietnam war.

FLAG DAY

HON. WILLIAM J. MARTINI

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 14, 1995

Mr. MARTINI. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to commemorate not a person, not a place, but a symbol. That symbol is the flag of the United States of America. Today, on Flag Day, we celebrate all this symbol has come to represent.

During World War II the Marines planted Old Glory at Iwo Jima; the U.S. astronauts placed the flag on the Moon; and every day our flag hangs behind the Speaker's chair as an individual reminder of why each one of us here in the House of Representatives have chosen to come to our Nation's Capitol. It is to insure the preservation and enhancement of the greatest form of government ever conceived.

Mr. Speaker, as you may be aware, evidence from archaeological digs proves that individuals created flags as early as 3500 B.C. These findings have shown that national pride symbolized by a flag has existed for thousands of years. It is no wonder that immediately upon colonization America's first settlers raised colonial flags; and that upon unification of the United States, one flag was raised to symbolize the birth of our new Nation.

The American flag is not merely a piece of cloth, rather it is a concrete symbol of what is valued in America. Almost 80 years ago on this day President Woodrow Wilson said:

This flag, which we honor and under which we serve, is the emblem of our unity, our power, our thought and purpose as a nation. It has no other character than that which we give it from generation to generation. The choices are ours . . .

Having the honor of being a Congressman from the State of New Jersey, I am proud of the contribution our State has had to the creation of the flag. Francis Hopkinson, a signer of the Declaration of Independence and a resident of New Jersey, was responsible for the stars in the U.S. flag.

Since a New Jerseyian helped create the flag, I am pleased to help take steps to forbid the desecration of the American flag.

Congressman GERALD SOLOMON (R-NY) has introduced H.J. Res. 79, a Constitutional amendment to prohibit physical desecration of the Flag of the United States. Some individuals will argue that this issue deals with the constitutional issue of free speech. I would argue that freedom of speech should be exercised and celebrated, and that even the freest of societies needs a common baseline of decency that should not be crossed. Without this baseline, a free society could quickly become an anarchical one. If it were not for our system of government and its institutions, these rights would not exist. As the symbol of those institutions, the flag deserves our respect and should be protected from gross defamation.

I am proud to be an original cosponsor of H.J. Res. 79. I am convinced this amendment to our Constitution is one of the best ways in which we can restore the proper sense of respect and appreciation for our flag and our institutions.